

Agenda: March 1, 2007

To: Regional Transportation Commission
From: Lyle Broschat, Planning Technician
Karen Pushnik, Senior Transportation Planner
Re: Taxi Regulations in Santa Cruz County

RECOMMENDATION

The Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee (E&D TAC) and staff recommend that the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC):

Approve the attached letter ([Attachment 1](#)) requesting that the County of Santa Cruz, the City of Capitola, the City of Santa Cruz, the City of Scotts Valley, and the City of Watsonville consider actions to taxicab ordinances that would benefit seniors, people living with disabilities and able-bodied adults.

BACKGROUND

Commercial taxi service in Santa Cruz County is regulated separately, through ordinance, by the County and by each of the four incorporated cities. All five jurisdictions regulate taxi service by mandate from the State of California (California Government Code 53075.5), to “protect the public health, safety, and welfare.” Jurisdictions regulate and oversee vehicle safety, driver qualifications, and business practices of commercial taxi companies.

DISCUSSION

The E&D TAC recognizes that commercial taxi service is a vital supplement to other commercial and non-commercial transportation services available to elderly and disabled residents of the county. E&D TAC members expressed concern about the lack of uniformity in regulation among the five jurisdictions. This condition may negatively impact county residents’ mobility needs, especially when taxi service is the only transportation service available to them, due to location or time.

The E&D TAC did not wish to be prescriptive to local jurisdiction legislative bodies about actions to take; however wanted to communicate and highlight for local jurisdictions the difficulties caused by inconsistent ordinances for the public at large, and specifically seniors and people with disabilities. Potential solutions could include a countywide ordinance or separate ordinances with consistent requirements relative to discounts, availability of accessible vehicles, fares, etc.

As addressed in the attached letter, the E&D TAC appreciates and encourages jurisdictions for their support of incentives to increase the availability of wheelchair-

accessible taxi service throughout the county (Attachment 1). The E&D TAC also supports a common regulatory incentive to establish fare structure uniformity and mandate senior discounts as a way to avoid confusion about the provision of services.

Two matrices are included with the attached letter; both are the result of staff research as requested by the E&D TAC. The first matrix (Attachment A) compares a range of specific issues in commercial taxi regulation, issues that may be of direct concern to elderly and disabled users. The comparison includes all five jurisdictions, and is based on established municipal or county code requirements. The second matrix (Attachment B) compares the rate structures for taxi service, as set by the legislative body of each jurisdiction.

The E&D TAC encourages the legislative bodies of each jurisdiction to examine this research and consider the impact of these inconsistencies from a countywide perspective, with special attention to meeting the needs of elderly and disabled residents.

Therefore, the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee and staff recommend that the Commission approve the attached letter (Attachment 1) requesting that the County of Santa Cruz, the City of Capitola, the City of Santa Cruz, the City of Scotts Valley, and the City of Watsonville consider actions to taxicab ordinances that would benefit seniors, people living with disabilities and able-bodied adults.

SUMMARY

Research by the E&D TAC and staff concluded that the lack of consistency in countywide commercial taxi regulation is a disservice to elderly and disabled residents who depend on this transportation mode as an important supplement to meeting their transportation needs. The E&D TAC and staff recommend sending a letter to the local jurisdiction requesting consideration of the impacts of these inconsistencies.

Attachment 1: Letter Regarding Inconsistent Taxi Regulation in Santa Cruz County (with matrices below)

- A. Taxicab Regulations by Jurisdiction
- B. Commercial Taxicab Rates by Jurisdiction